Scotland: 2026-27 El Nino checklist

Last reviewed: 2 Nov 2026 · Peak risk window: Dec-Feb · 72 actions

In an emergency, or if life is at risk, call 999 (or 112). Follow the advice of your local council, the emergency services and official flood and weather warnings. They override this checklist.

Water and food

- [ ] **Store a 3-day supply of bottled drinking water**
  Storms, floods and power cuts can interrupt supply; Ready Scotland and British Red Cross both specify 3 days (neither gives a litres-per-person figure)
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £5-£15 (indicative) | Qty (family of 4): 3 days' supply for 4 people (no official litres figure)
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Store 3 days of non-perishable food that needs no cooking, plus a tin opener**
  Cooking and boiling may be impossible in a power cut
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £15-£40 (indicative) | Qty (family of 4): 3 days of ready-to-eat meals for 4
  redcross.org.uk

- [ ] **Keep fridge and freezer doors shut in a power cut; check chilled food after 4 hours**
  Closed fridge stays cold up to ~4 h; full freezer ~48 h (24 h if half full); 'when in doubt, throw it out'
  When: before the first storm warning
  redcross.org.uk

- [ ] **Join the Scottish Water Priority Services Register if you need extra support**
  Registered customers can be offered extra help in a water interruption (eligibility incl. under-5s, over-60s, medical needs); sign-up via the PSR Scotland site
  When: This fortnight
  psrscotland.com

- [ ] **Throw away food that floodwater or sewage has touched**
  GOV.UK (citing the Food Standards Agency): do not eat any food that has been touched or covered by floodwater or sewage; lettuce or strawberries that were in the garden when it flooded should be thrown away. Scottish advice is in the Food Standards Scotland flooding row.
  When: after any flood
  gov.uk

- [ ] **If flooding may have cut off or contaminated your water, contact Scottish Water (0800 077 8778, 24 hours) or, for a private supply, your council**
  NHS inform: your water supply may be cut off or contaminated; contact Scottish Water for public supplies or your local authority for private supplies; wash hands with warm water and soap after contact with floodwater
  When: save now
  nhsinform.scot

- [ ] **After a flood, throw away food that touched floodwater and anything in damaged or non-waterproof packaging. Throw away food from a flooded fridge or freezer. Keep only sealed, undamaged cans or pouches, and clean the outside first**
  Food Standards Scotland warns that floodwater can contain harmful microbes and chemicals; if unsure whether food is safe, discard it
  When: after any flood or power cut | Cost: free advice; replacement food and cleaning supplies cost extra
  foodstandards.gov.scot

- [ ] **Add a first aid kit, toiletries and hand sanitiser to your emergency kit**
  Ready Scotland's kit list includes a first aid kit, toiletries and hand sanitiser
  When: Now | Cost: £10-£25 (indicative) | Qty (family of 4): 1 kit per household
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

Power, heat and light

- [ ] **Keep a battery-powered or wind-up torch and radio with spare batteries; use torches not candles**
  Red Cross power-cut page: use battery-powered or wind-up torches and avoid candles (fire risk); Ready Scotland emergency-plan page: a radio keeps you informed when phones fail (try digital and FM)
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £10-£35 (indicative) | Qty (family of 4): 1 torch per person + 1 radio
  redcross.org.uk

- [ ] **Charge phones and power banks before every storm warning; keep a charged power bank in the kit**
  Ready Scotland advises charging phones and power banks in case of a power cut
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £10-£30 (indicative) | Qty (family of 4): 1 power bank per adult
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Fit a carbon monoxide alarm (BS EN 50291) and book a gas safety check**
  More gas heater/boiler use in winter raises carbon monoxide risk
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £10-£30 per alarm (indicative); check cost varies | Qty (family of 4): n/a (NHS inform gives no alarm count; follow the alarm maker's and Gas Safe engineer's guidance)
  nhsinform.scot

- [ ] **Never use generators, fuel-driven equipment, barbecues or camping stoves indoors or in other enclosed spaces**
  GOV.UK flood-recovery guidance warns that indoor use of outdoor fuel-burning equipment can cause fatal carbon monoxide poisoning
  When: before any use
  gov.uk

- [ ] **Aim for at least 18°C in rooms you use; layer clothing and blankets, close curtains and doors in a cold snap or power cut**
  Cold-related health risk is higher for over-65s, under-5s and people with heart/lung conditions
  When: from first cold spell; peak risk Feb-Mar
  nhsinform.scot

- [ ] **Draught-proof windows and doors and protect pipes and tanks from frost; get free advice**
  Home Energy Scotland: simple draught-proofing around windows and doors could save about £25 a year, and its page links to pipe and tank insulation guides; free impartial advice on 0808 808 2282. Frozen or burst pipes are a cold-snap risk
  When: This month | Cost: £5-£40 (indicative, DIY materials)
  homeenergyscotland.org

- [ ] **Know carbon monoxide symptoms (headache, dizziness, feeling sick, weakness, confusion, shortness of breath) and act at once**
  NHS: symptoms may come and go and can ease when you leave the affected area. Stop using the suspect appliance if you can, get outside and get medical advice quickly; call 999 or go to A&E for trouble breathing, sudden confusion, loss of consciousness, weakness, or chest or muscle pain; do not drive yourself
  When: before the heating season
  nhs.uk

- [ ] **Report damaged power lines that are down to your network operator (call 105) and call 999 if there is a significant risk to the public**
  Red Cross power-cut page: report damaged power lines that are down to your network operator and call 999 if there is a significant risk to the public; Ready Scotland: call 105 (free) to report a power problem
  When: at each storm warning
  redcross.org.uk

Flood and storm protection

- [ ] **Secure ladders, trampolines, garden furniture and toys before a storm; keep vehicles in a garage if you have one**
  Loose objects become projectiles in high winds
  When: at each Met Office wind warning
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Do not walk or shelter close to buildings, fences, walls, trees or shorelines in a storm**
  Ready Scotland lists these as places to avoid in a storm; storms can bring down trees and coastal storm surge adds flood risk on the coast
  When: at each storm warning
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Obtain suitable flood protection in advance; do not rely on council sandbag stocks**
  Dumfries and Galloway Council says its free sandbag service has limited stocks and should not be relied upon; sandbags provide only short-term protection
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £15-£60 for basic sandbags (indicative); purpose-made barriers cost extra | Qty (family of 4): property-specific; no universal quantity stated
  dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk

- [ ] **Consider purpose-made property-level protection (floodgates, automatic air bricks, non-return valves) in preference to sandbags**
  Sandbags protect only briefly; permanent products work better; Dumfries & Galloway also runs a subsidised flood products scheme
  When: get a quote within a month | Cost: varies (quote-dependent; no verified price) | Qty (family of 4): 1 survey / quote
  dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk

- [ ] **Check your long-term flood risk on the SEPA Flood Maps**
  Maps show long-term risk by area, not live flooding or a specific property; SEPA's page also gives the Floodline information line 0345 988 1188; sign up for warnings in the comms_alerts rows; use live flood updates for current warnings
  When: Now
  map.sepa.org.uk

- [ ] **Edinburgh: collect a limited number of filled sandbags from the red sheds at Craigmillar, Sighthill and Seafield HWRCs; no delivery; or buy from any builders merchant**
  City of Edinburgh Council page covers Edinburgh only; it provides a limited number of filled sandbags and does not deliver to individual homes
  When: This fortnight
  edinburgh.gov.uk

- [ ] **Do not walk, cycle, swim or drive through floodwater; evacuate if you are asked to**
  Ready Scotland: do not walk or cycle through standing or flowing flood water, even shallow fast-flowing water can knock you over or move a vehicle, do not drive through flood water, and evacuate if asked; NHS inform: do not walk, swim or drive in flood water
  When: during any flood
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

Home preparation

- [ ] **Photograph your home and belongings now, before any flood**
  Evidence for insurance claims
  When: This fortnight
  scottishfloodforum.org

- [ ] **Learn how to turn off gas, electricity and water**
  Reduces damage and danger in a flood or burst pipe
  When: This fortnight
  scottishfloodforum.org

- [ ] **Write a household emergency plan (emergency actions, how you will get information, a meeting place, key numbers, support needs) and keep a printed copy**
  Ready Scotland recommends a written plan with a fillable PDF template and says to keep a printed or handwritten copy handy
  When: This month
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Move valuables, family photos and electronics to upper floors or high shelves early; move the car to higher ground if safe**
  Most things can be replaced; photos cannot
  When: at first flood alert
  scottishfloodforum.org

- [ ] **Keep a flood kit or flood plan in a waterproof box stored high up (see the Ready Scotland kit list for contents)**
  Aberdeenshire Council (page dated 17 September 2025) advises a flood kit or plan stored in a waterproof box up high; also works as a grab bag if evacuated
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £10-£25 (indicative, box only) | Qty (family of 4): 1 box per household
  aberdeenshire.gov.uk

- [ ] **After a flood, do not switch gas or electricity back on, or use wet appliances, until a qualified gas engineer or electrician has checked them**
  GOV.UK says potentially wet gas and electrical systems or appliances must be checked by a qualified gas engineer or electrician before use
  When: after any flood; before restoring or using affected systems | Cost: varies (no verified price)
  gov.uk

Documents

- [ ] **Keep copies of insurance policies, birth certificates and photo ID in a waterproof bag in your kit**
  Ready Scotland and Red Cross both list copies of key documents; originals may be lost or soaked
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £3-£10 (indicative) | Qty (family of 4): 1 set of copies per household
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Keep a paper list of key contacts, medicines and insurance details (incl. GP and insurer claim line)**
  Phones and networks may fail
  When: This fortnight | Qty (family of 4): 1 list
  redcross.org.uk

- [ ] **Pack medical information and copies of prescriptions with your medication**
  Ready Scotland kit lists essential medication, medical information and prescriptions
  When: This fortnight | Qty (family of 4): 1 set per person on regular medication
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Back up your photos and important files somewhere safe from flooding (for example cloud storage or a drive kept upstairs)**
  Scottish Flood Forum includes keeping computer data and photographs safe in its flood action plan
  When: This month | Cost: varies with storage method (no verified price)
  scottishfloodforum.org

Children

- [ ] **Pack baby nappies and hygiene supplies**
  Ready Scotland's kit list includes these supplies; tailor the kit to your household
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £15-£40 (indicative) (nappies, wipes and formula together) | Qty (family of 4): tailored to each child's needs; no infant-specific quantity stated
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Pack ready-made infant formula and essential medication**
  Ready Scotland's kit list includes these supplies; tailor the kit to your household
  When: This fortnight | Cost: see the nappies and wipes row | Qty (family of 4): tailored to each child's needs; no infant-specific quantity stated
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Include age-appropriate toys and nappies where needed in your emergency preparations**
  Scottish Flood Forum asks households to consider children's and babies' needs, including toys and nappies
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £0-£15 (indicative, using existing items where possible) | Qty (family of 4): tailored to each child; no official quantity stated
  scottishfloodforum.org

- [ ] **Agree a safe meeting place and teach children how to call for help**
  Red Cross: agree a meeting place clear of hazards; teach children what to do and how to call for help
  When: This month
  redcross.org.uk

- [ ] **If a child was directly involved in a flood or storm and may be traumatised, ask about local CAMHS support**
  British Red Cross teaching resource: if a child was involved and may be experiencing trauma, local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) might be able to help
  When: after any event
  redcross.org.uk

- [ ] **Keep children out of floodwater and muddy areas not yet cleaned**
  Floodwater can hide hazards and be contaminated
  When: during any flood
  nhsinform.scot

- [ ] **If drinking water is unavailable or contaminated, follow NHS instructions for using bottled water to prepare infant formula; sterilise feeding equipment and mix powder with water at least 70°C**
  NHS permits bottled water in these exceptional circumstances but warns it is not sterile and may contain excessive sodium or sulphate; follow its preparation steps and additional FSA or UKHSA advice
  When: prepare before disruption; follow safety instructions for every feed | Cost: £5-£15 (indicative, bottled water only) | Qty (family of 4): according to feeding needs; no emergency stock quantity stated
  nhs.uk

Older, disabled and medical needs

- [ ] **Register on the Priority Services Register with your electricity network: SSEN in the north of Scotland, SP Energy Networks in central and southern Scotland (find yours by postcode on psrscotland.com)**
  Free; eligible groups incl. over 60s, under-5s, medical-equipment users, disabled people
  When: This fortnight
  ssen.co.uk ; psrscotland.com

- [ ] **Plan for electricity-dependent medical equipment with your device supplier or clinician; tell your network operator**
  If you rely on powered medical equipment, keep spare chargers or batteries and its instructions in your kit. Ask your supplier or clinician what to do in a power cut. Join your network's Priority Services Register.
  When: This fortnight | Cost: varies (not verified) | Qty (family of 4): per device
  redcross.org.uk ; beready.campaign.gov.uk

- [ ] **Make sure you have enough medicines, food and heating fuel before bad weather; ask your pharmacist what to keep**
  NHS inform: check you have enough food, medicines and heating fuel in case it becomes harder to leave the house; if unsure which medicines to keep at home, ask your pharmacist
  When: This month | Qty (family of 4): no official figure; ask your pharmacist
  nhsinform.scot

- [ ] **Set up a check-in plan with neighbours and family; check on vulnerable people if safe to do so**
  Ready Scotland: check on people who need extra help if it is safe, and keep in touch by phone or in person. Higher cold-weather risk for people 65 and over, children (especially 5 and under) and people with underlying health conditions
  When: This month
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **If you keep medicines in a fridge (for example insulin), ask your pharmacist now what to do in a power cut and keep the fridge shut**
  Red Cross: a closed fridge will usually stay cold for up to four hours; NHS inform advises asking your pharmacist what to keep at home. No official page opened gives a safe time out of the fridge for specific medicines, so ask your pharmacist or prescriber
  When: This fortnight
  redcross.org.uk

- [ ] **Dispose of medicines that floodwater has contaminated safely and ask your pharmacist for a replacement**
  London Fire Brigade (England): food or medicines that have been contaminated should be disposed of safely, and you can take medicines to a pharmacy for disposal; no Scottish official page found
  When: after any flood
  london-fire.gov.uk

Pets

- [ ] **Keep pet supplies and any assistance-animal documents or supplies in your emergency kit**
  Ready Scotland includes pet and assistance-animal supplies
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £5-£20 (indicative, basic consumables only) | Qty (family of 4): tailored to each animal; no pet-specific quantity stated
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Include pets in your emergency plan**
  Red Cross five-tips page advises including pets in your plan (it does not mention pet medication)
  When: This month | Qty (family of 4): per pet
  redcross.org.uk

- [ ] **Include pet supplies (food, water, leads/harnesses or carriers, medication, bedding, waste bags) in your emergency kit; keep essentials packed together in case you must leave at short notice**
  Red Cross emergency kit page lists emergency supplies for pets
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £5-£20 (indicative) | Qty (family of 4): per pet
  redcross.org.uk

Alerts and communication

- [ ] **Register for free SEPA Floodline flood warnings (email required online; or call 0345 988 1188, option 2 Scotland, option 3 for an adviser)**
  Flood Warnings are targeted where SEPA monitors; elsewhere wider Flood Alerts by council area
  When: Now
  myfloodline.sepa.scot

- [ ] **Get Met Office weather warnings through its app or weather-warning emails**
  Ready Scotland recommends both methods for keeping up to date with warnings in your area
  When: Now
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Check SEPA live flood updates before travelling or in heavy rain**
  Current warnings and alerts for Scotland
  When: each storm / heavy-rain day
  floodline.sepa.org.uk

- [ ] **Save emergency numbers on paper and phone: 999, police 101, NHS 24 111, gas 0800 111 999, Scottish Water 0800 077 8778, Floodline 0345 988 1188, power cut 105**
  Listed on Ready Scotland
  When: Now | Qty (family of 4): 1 list
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Learn what Met Office warning colours mean: yellow = read the warning to see which weather it covers; amber = possible travel delays, road and rail closures, power cuts and risk to life and property; red = dangerous weather, risk to life, take action now**
  Met Office: yellow warnings cover a range of situations so read the content; amber means increased likelihood of impacts that could disrupt plans; red means dangerous weather is expected and you should act now
  When: before the first winter storm
  metoffice.gov.uk

- [ ] **Use Ready Scotland to build a practical emergency plan for you and your community**
  Ready Scotland: practical steps to prepare for emergencies and protect yourself and your community
  When: This fortnight
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

- [ ] **Before driving in snow or ice, check Traffic Scotland and the Met Office, and keep a winter kit in the car (de-icer, scraper, torch, hi-vis jacket, warm clothes, blanket)**
  Ready Scotland points to Traffic Scotland for live traffic and gritted roads; stopping distances are much longer on ice
  When: before the first frost | Cost: £15-£40 (indicative) | Qty (family of 4): 1 car kit
  traffic.gov.scot ; ready.campaign.gov.scot
- [ ] **Check your phone can get UK Emergency Alerts (iPhone iOS 14.5 or later, Android 11 or later, on 4G or 5G); no sign-up needed**
  GOV.UK: alerts work on all UK 4G and 5G networks; phones that are off, or on 2G/3G or wifi only, will not get them
  When: Now
  gov.uk

Money and insurance

- [ ] **Check that your buildings and contents insurance covers flood damage**
  Ready Scotland advises checking both types of flood cover before flooding happens
  When: This fortnight | Cost: free to check; insurance premiums vary
  ready.campaign.gov.scot
- [ ] **Check Flood Re's full eligibility criteria and ask your insurer whether your policy and property qualify**
  Flood Re can help some homes get affordable flood cover. Whether yours qualifies depends on the policy, the building and who lives there. Tenants can qualify too. Ask your insurer.
  When: before your next renewal | Cost: free to check; premium varies
  floodre.co.uk
- [ ] **Keep some emergency cash for essentials such as food and fuel**
  Cards and cash machines may fail in a power cut; shops may only accept cash
  When: This fortnight | Cost: £50-£100 (indicative) | Qty (family of 4): a small amount of cash
  redcross.org.uk
- [ ] **Understand Ofgem's current price cap and contact your supplier early if struggling**
  Typical GB dual-fuel bill £1,723 a year (up 4%) for 1 Oct-31 Dec 2026, with VAT removed from electricity.
  When: Now. Key date: Ofgem announces the January to March 2027 price cap on 25 Nov 2026.
  ofgem.gov.uk ; ofgem.gov.uk
- [ ] **If struggling with heating-oil or LPG costs, check eligibility and apply promptly to the Emergency Heating Oil Scheme**
  If you heat with oil or LPG, the Scottish Government's Emergency Heating Oil Scheme can give £300. You must have bought fuel since 1 April 2026 or be about to order, and nobody at your address can have had an award in the last 3 months. There is no fixed end date, so apply soon.
  When: as soon as possible if eligible; applications can precede an imminent order | Cost: free application; £300 support if eligible
  homeenergyscotland.org
- [ ] **Get free energy advice from Home Energy Scotland on 0808 808 2282**
  Free, impartial; can look for funding
  When: This month
  homeenergyscotland.org

Local help

- [ ] **Perth & Kinross Council flooding: 24/7 flood emergencies 01738 476476; Flooding Team 01738 475000**
  Council flooding page lists contacts, warnings, grants
  When: save now
  pkc.gov.uk
- [ ] **Check Dumfries and Galloway Council's flood pod, emergency equipment loans and sandbag arrangements at Stranraer, Newton Stewart, Castle Douglas, Dumfries and Lockerbie**
  The council lists limited sandbag stocks during extreme weather, depot hours Monday-Thursday 9am-3pm and Friday 9am-noon excluding public holidays, plus a subsidised products scheme
  When: check within 2 weeks; recheck availability before travelling | Cost: free information and limited sandbag service; subsidised products cost extra (not priced)
  dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk
- [ ] **Aberdeenshire Council flood preparation and sandbag advice**
  Page dated 17 September 2025: advises signing up to SEPA Floodline, a flood kit or plan in a waterproof box up high, checking insurance; sandbags from local builders' merchants
  When: check within 2 weeks
  aberdeenshire.gov.uk

- [ ] **Highland Council flood contacts: 01349 886601 (Mon-Fri 9-5), 01349 886690 (out of hours); Flood Risk Management 01349 868800**
  If affected by flooding; vulnerable residents prioritised
  When: save now
  highland.gov.uk

- [ ] **Save the Scottish Flood Forum enquiry line 0131 563 9392 (weekdays 9am to 5pm per its page) for flood-preparation and recovery support**
  The charity supports individuals and communities at risk of flooding or affected by it
  When: save now | Cost: free information; telephone call charges may apply
  scottishfloodforum.org

- [ ] **British Red Cross preparedness guides (emergency kit, floods, storms and power cuts, snow and winter weather)**
  National charity guidance; not Scotland-specific
  When: read within 2 weeks
  redcross.org.uk

- [ ] **Breathing Space 0800 83 85 87 (free, confidential, age 16+, Scotland) for stress after a flood or storm**
  NHS inform lists Breathing Space for flood-related stress; phone 111 if unwell after flooding
  When: after any event
  nhsinform.scot

- [ ] **Save 105 and call it free anywhere in Scotland to report a power cut or get restoration updates (it reaches SSEN or SP Energy Networks, whichever runs your area)**
  Ready Scotland lists 105 for reporting power problems and checking when supply will be restored; SSEN also offers its Power Track service for reporting and tracking faults
  When: save within 2 weeks; report a power cut when needed
  ready.campaign.gov.scot ; ssen.co.uk ; psrscotland.com

- [ ] **If you smell gas, call the gas emergency line 0800 111 999 at once (free, 24 hours)**
  Ready Scotland lists 0800 111 999 for gas emergencies
  When: save now
  ready.campaign.gov.scot

General preparedness information from official sources, not personal, legal, medical or insurance advice. Always follow instructions from your local authorities and emergency services. In an emergency call 999 or 112 (UK) or 911 (US). Checklist built from official-source tables (source hosts shown; full links on the website); costs marked indicative are planning ranges.

Full links and updates:
ninoprep.com/zones/uk-tlm/
Scan the code or type the address.